

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VALLET 02486 01 OF 02 040848Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8380
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VALLETTA 02486

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MT, UK
SUBJECT: MALTESE NEUTRALITY GUARANTEE; THE LANGUAGE ON
--- - DRYDOCK ACCESS

REF: STATE 189500

1. A SHORT ANSWER IS EASY. WE DON'T THINK THE U.S.
SHOULD MAKE AN APPROACH TO MINTOFF CONCERNING THE CHANGE
IN WORDING OF THE MALTESE NEUTRALITY DECLARATION; THE
BRITISH ARE THE OBVIOUS CANDIDATE, BUT THEIR INTEREST IS
LUKEWARM AND THE TIMING IS POOR. WE RECOMMEND A HOLDING
PATTERN UNTIL THE VISIBILITY IS BETTER.

2. A LONGER ANSWER IS MORE COMPLEX, OTHER THAN PROMPTLY
TO REITERATE THAT WE THINK THE US IS THE WRONG CANDIDATE
TO MAKE AN APPROACH, BOTH IN TERMS OF OUR POLICY
PREFERENCE NOT TO GET INVOLVED AND BECAUSE A U.S.
APPROACH COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IF MINTOFF CHOSE TO
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PAGE 02 VALLET 02486 01 OF 02 040848Z

BE SUSPICIOUS OF OUR MOTIVES. SINCE THE MALTESE APPROACH
WAS ORIGINALLY MADE TO THE BRITISH THEY ARE THE OBVIOUS
CANDIDATE TO GO BACK TO MINTOFF AND SUGGEST THAT HE REOPEN
THE ISSUE DIRECTLY WITH THE ITALIANS (AND FRENCH).
UNFORTUNATELY WE GET THE IMPRESSION HERE THAT THE BRITISH
DON'T HAVE ALL THAT MUCH INTEREST IN THE ISSUE, EXCEPT
POSSIBLY FOR CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE ROYAL NAVY. WE

ASSUME THAT BOTH THE APPARENT LACK OF ZEAL IN HMG AND THE ITALIAN HANGUP ON LEGAL NICETIES REFLECT A DISINTEREST OR LACK OF FOCUS GROWING OUT OF THE FACT THAT NEITHER NAVY HAS USED MALTA DRYDOCKS TO ANY EXTENT IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT BOTH, ESPECIALLY THE ITALIANS, HAVE EXTENSIVE AND UNDERUTILIZED DRYDOCK FACILITIES OF THEIR OWN.

3. MOREOVER NEITHER APPEAR TO PUT MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE LONGER TERM POLITICAL IMPLICATION OF LANGUAGE THAT TAKES FROM NON-US NATO POWERS WHAT IS NOW AVAILABLE TO THEM, WHILE TAKING NOTHING FROM THE OTHER SIDE WHO ARE ALREADY EXCLUDED. MEANWHILE THE ITALIAN FOCUS HAS AS YET APPARENTLY BEEN ENTIRELY AT A TECHNICAL, LEGAL LEVEL, THOUGH ACCOMPANIED BY TALK OF TAKING THE ISSUE ULTIMATELY TO THE POLITICAL LEVEL - WHATEVER THAT MEANS IN THIS INSTANCE. WE HAVE NO REAL FEEL LOCALLY HOW THE FRENCH FEEL ABOUT ALL THIS.

4. THE LIMITED DEGREE OF BRITISH AND ITALIAN CONCERN IS APPARENT IN WHAT WE HEAR LOCALLY FROM THE BRITISH. UK HC ASPIN TELLS US HE HAS NOW BEEN AUTHORIZED TO GO BACK TO THE MALTESE AT A TIME HE DEEMS BEST TO SAY A) THAT BRITS HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE ITALIANS ON SUBJECT, B) THAT ITALIANS ADVISE THEM THAT THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIALOGUE (I.E. GOI AND GOF) FEEL THAT TO GO BACK TO LANGUAGE EXCLUDING ONLY THE TWO SUPERPOWERS WOULD
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PAGE 03 VALLET 02486 01 OF 02 040848Z

BE "THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE" ON THE PART OF WARSAW PACT STATES THAT MIGHT CHOOSE TO EXERCISE THE OPTION; I.E. A KIND OF INDIRECT SOVIET INFLUENCE; BUT THAT C) THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE AN OPPORTUNITY AT A LATER STAGE FOR THE MALTESE TO REOPEN THE ISSUE, PREFERABLY AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, SHOULD THEY WISH TO DO SO. WE DON'T FIND THIS VERY EFFECTIVE IF THE PURPOSE IS TO ENCOURAGE THE MALTESE TO PRESS FOR WHAT MINTOFF PROFESSES TO WANT.

5. ANOTHER PROBLEM IS TIMING. THIS IS A POOR TIME TO TAKE UP THE ISSUE WITH MINTOFF, WHO IN ANY EVENT DEPARTED MALTA AUGUST 2 FOR A 10-14 DAY MOTOR YACHT VACATION. MOREOVER THE BRITISH HAVE THEIR OWN DIFFICULTIES WITH HIM OVER THE BBC ISSUE AND THE CLOSE-DOWN OF BFBS, AND THE ITALIANS WILL BE GUN SHY UNTIL THEY SEE MORE CLEARLY WHAT MINTOFF'S JULY 31 ULTIMATUM MAY HAVE MEANT IN REAL TERMS. IN THIS CONNECTION WE ARE TOLD THAT THE ITALIANS ON JULY 31 SENT MINTOFF A MESSAGE OFFERING TO BEGIN TALKS ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE MATTERS. THIS HAS HAD NO RESPONSE AND THERE MAY BE NONE, AT LEAST FOR SOME TIME. ATTORNEY GENERAL MIZZI TOLD US AUGUST 2 (SEPTEL) THAT THE ITALIAN OFFER WAS WORTHLESS, SINCE IT SPOKE OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

RATHER THAN BUDGETARY SUPPORT AND THAT THE LATTER WAS A SINE QUA NON IF THE NEUTRALITY GUARANTEE DOCUMENT WAS TO HAVE ANY VALIDITY. IN COMMENTING ON THE PRESENT LANGUAGE CONCERNING ACCESS, HOWEVER, MIZZI MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE AT LEAST CONTINUED TO PREFER THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE EXCLUDING SIMPLY THE TWO SUPERPOWERS.

6. WE CONCLUDE THAT IT BEST TO LEAVE THE MATTER WHERE IT IS FOR THE MOMENT, UNTIL WE SEE HOW MINTOFF CHOOSES TO RESPOND TO THE ITALIANS AND WE KNOW BETTER WHAT LIFE IS LEFT IN THE PRESENT DRAFT NEUTRALITY DOCUMENT. HAVING SAID THAT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS WORTH THE EFFORT TO

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PAGE 01 VALLET 02486 02 OF 02 040850Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 VALLETTA 02486

TRY TO GET THE LANGUAGE CHANGED. IF WE ARE TO HAVE ANY SUCCESS HOWEVER THAT WILL REQUIRE STIMULATING A GREATER DEGREE OF INTEREST, AND AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, ON THE PART OF BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE ITALIANS THAN APPEARS TO EXIST NOW. LAINGEN

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